

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6067

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, FJ

SUBJECT: FIRST SESSION OF FIJI'S NEW PARLIAMENT

1. FIJI'S NEWLY ELECTED PARLIAMENT MET FOR THE FIRST TIME APRIL 28 IN A BRIEF, UNEVENTFUL SESSION. A SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKER WERE ELECTED, MEMBERS SWORN IN, AND MOTIONS FILED FOR LATER CONSIDERATION. THE OPPOSITION NATIONAL FEDERATION PARTY (NFP) HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE INTRODUCTION OF A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE, AND IT APPEARS BOTH PARTIES HAVE DECIDED TO DELAY SUCH A MOTION UNTIL THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION RESUMES NEXT WEEK. THE GOVERNOR GENERAL WILL FORMALLY OPEN THIS SITTING OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT WITH A FORMAL ADDRESS ON APRIL 29, BUT NO OTHER BUSINESS WILL BE CONDUCTED ON THAT DAY.

2. WITH THE ELECTION DEFEAT OF THE PAST SPEAKER, SIRH IJAY SINGH, FORMER DEPUTY SPEAKER MOSESE QIONIBARAVI, A SUVA KSUVA BUSINESS-MAN, WAS NOMINATED AND ELECTED UNOPPOSED TO THE SPEAKERSHIP. A SECOND ALLIANCE MP, RATSJSECI NAWALOWALO, WAS ALSO ELECTED UNOPPOSED AS DEPUTY SPEAKER. QIONIBARAVI'S NOMINATION WAS FULLY EXPECTED, ALTHOUGH ALLIANCE LEADERS WERE UNSURE WHETHER THE NFP WOULD ATTEMPT TO CONTEST THE POSITION.

3. THE NEW LEADER OF THE HOUSE IS ALLIANCE MP JONATI MAVOA,
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MIUNISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS, WORKS AND OMURISM. THERE ARE TWO NEW WHIPS, SOLOMONE MONCIVALU, FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND CHANDRA S. PILLAY FOR T ZU OPPOSITION. PILLAY TAKE S THE PLACE OF KARAM RAMRAKHA, WHO HAS BEEN OPENLY CHALLENGING THE LEADERSHIP OF SIDDIQ KOYA, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. RATU SIR PENAIA GANILAU, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AND MOAVOA, MOMOIVALU, KOYA AND PILLAY MAKE UP THE HOUSE BUSINESS COMMITTEE, WHICH MET

BRIEFLY AFTER THE SESSION TO DETERMINE WHAT MOTIONS WILL COME BEFORE THE HOUSE FOR CONSIDERATION THIS WEEK AND NEXT.

4. TWO ELECTED MEMBERS WERE NOT SWORN IN. ALLIANCE MP CHARLES WALKER, NAMED EARLIER AS MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, IS IN EUROPE ATTENDING SUGAR TALKS AND WILL BE SWORN IN ON HIS RETURN TO FIJI. FIJIAN NATIONALIST PARTY LEADER SAKIASI BUTADROKA IS STILL IN JAIL ON CHARGES OF INCITING RACIAL ANTAGONISM AND PARTICIPATING IN AN UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY. DESPITE SEVERAL APPEALS BUTADROKA WAS REFUSED BAIL TO ATTEND THE SWEARING IN CEREMONY, AND SHOULD HE BE CONVICTED OF THE CHARGES AND SENTENCED TO TWO AND A HALF YEARS OR MORE, HE COULD LOSE HIS SEAT ENTIRELY.

5. THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT THE ALLIANCE WILL INTRODUCE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE MOTION EARLY IN THE SESSION IN ORDER TO LEGITIMIZE THEIR MINORITY GOVERNMENT. THE NFP, RATHER THAN PLACING THEMSELVES IN THE POSITION OF VOTING DOWN SUCH A MOTION, WILPLLIKELY AVOID IT BY ABSTAINING EN MASSE. THE SOLE INDEPENDENT A

P, RATU OSEA GAVIDI, HAS TOLD REPORTERS THAT HE WOULD NOT SUPPORT A MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE HE OPPOSES ANOTHER GENERAL ELECTION SO SOON AFTER THE LAST ONE.

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